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FOR INFORMATION

COUNTRY NOTE**

Mali

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for Mali for a programme of cooperation for the period 1998 to 2002.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. Mali, a Sahelian country, most of which lies in the desert region, is one of the poorest countries in the world. It has a population of nearly 11 million inhabitants. With a per capita gross national product (GNP) of $US 250, Mali's Human Development Index ranking in 1996 is 171 out of 174. About 73 per cent of the population lives below the poverty level of 137,000 CFA francs ($US 275) set by the Malian Government. The external debt burden amounted in 1994 to 152 per cent of GNP, with 28 per cent of export earnings being earmarked for debt servicing.

2. In deciding to use the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as

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** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1997.

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the framework for reviewing the situation of children and women, the Government of Mali and UNICEF confirm that Mali and its partners will use these Conventions as a basis for defining their action in favour of children and women. That decision was based on five factors: (a) the ratification of the two Conventions by Mali; (b) the ongoing process of democratization and decentralization; (c) the new rights-based approach to development resulting from the near universal ratification of the two Conventions; (d) the complementarity of the two Conventions; and (e) the fact that the two Conventions represent both the starting point and the purpose of UNICEF activities. The analysis was based on the concept of the right to survival, to development, to protection and to participation (the latter being a cross-sectoral element which supports, and is in turn supported, by the three others).

3. In terms of the priority problems of the survival of children and women, the high maternal (1,200 per 100,000 live births), infant (117 per 1,000 live births) and child (210 per 1,000 live births) mortality rates, and the high incidence of permanent disabilities are attributable to several factors: poor performance of and limited access to health care services (40 per cent); closely spaced pregnancies; inadequate access to supplies of drinking water (45 per cent); poor sanitation; practices that adversely affect health (excision 94 per cent, poor weaning practices and diet); the alarming increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and in the incidence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) (4.5 per cent).

4. Problems in the area of development mainly concern the low school enrolment rate (50 per cent for boys and 33 per cent for girls according to government sources) and the low literacy rates, especially among girls and women (14 per cent, according to government sources), the poor performance of the educational system (30 per cent repeat rate) and the fact that few women participate in public and political life or have paid employment. The problems with respect to protection are: the poor record of compliance with the civil rights of the child; laws and traditional practices that discriminate against women; physical and mental abuse; economic and social exploitation; the degradation of moral standards and its consequences; and the fact that the specific needs of particularly disadvantaged groups are neither protected nor provided for.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The mid-term review of the 1993-1997 programme led to a number of general conclusions which resulted in the adjustment of the current programme's strategies and the identification of strategies for the following programme. In particular, it highlighted the need to: strengthen programme support for the formulation and implementation of national policies; strengthen the capacity of public institutions and civil society to provide support; strengthen the complementarity and cross-sectoral nature of programme activities (inter alia, by including nutritional aspects in the health programme); and accelerate the expansion of decentralized basic services coverage through greater community empowerment. The review also confirmed the wisdom of efforts to gradually shift towards strategies directed at institutional capacity-building and community

empowerment in order to support and enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of services. It also confirmed the wisdom of the decision to shift the emphasis in the education programme now under way to support for policy formulation and improving access to and the quality of basic education. Lastly, the review stressed the need to channel activities relating to water supply, hygiene and sanitation through the district and area health centres.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

6. The new programming framework was prepared on the basis of Mali's priorities and policies, the analysis of the situation, the mid-term review and the complementarity of UNICEF with the other partners, putting emphasis on the new priorities arising from the sectoral investment programmes (health and education) and those set out in the country strategy note.

7. The programme of cooperation for the period 1998-2002 is based on three intersectoral programmes: survival, development and protection. Thus, the programme shifts away from the traditional sectoral approach to an integrated and multisectoral approach within each programme and is strengthened by the interrelationship and complementarity of the three programmes. The programme aims at helping children and women in Mali to enjoy the rights set out in the two Conventions. Enhancing the well-being, the basic skills and knowledge of children and women in an environment propitious to the promotion of rights, will generate a momentum for increased involvement and empowerment. The aim reflects a long-term commitment which goes well beyond the five-year programme.

8. The programme's goals are designed to monitor, over a period of five years, the results in terms of securing the rights of children and women in Mali. These goals are to help Mali in its efforts to: (a) develop a culture of law which will support the promotion, enjoyment and protection of the rights of children and women; (b) reduce infant and child mortality by 30 per cent; (c) reduce maternal mortality by 20 per cent; (d) reduce the prevalence of permanent handicaps among children and women related to nutritional deficiencies, poliomyelitis and childbirth; (e) increase the gross enrolment ratio from 42 to 60 per cent; and (f) increase the literacy rate of women from 14 to 40 per cent. These goals are part of the national plan of action for children and the plan of action for the advancement of women, which reflect the commitments entered into by Mali at the World Summit for Children and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

9. These goals will be achieved through four comprehensive strategies: (a) strengthening of Mali's capacity in the formulation and implementation of a sound development policy framework that guarantees the rights of children and women; (b) support for the move of civil society towards greater empowerment of the people; (c) support for the implementation of decentralization; and (d) strengthening of the geographical convergence of multisectoral interventions in terms of synergy and impact by placing special emphasis on the poorest children and women. At the operational level, the programme will be supported by two cross-sectoral strategies, namely, social mobilization and monitoring and evaluation.

10. The survival programme covers health, nutrition and water-hygiene-sanitation. Its objectives are to help the country to: (a) reduce under-five child mortality attributable to diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections, malaria and malnutrition by 40 per cent, and to reduce mortality due to the diseases covered by the expanded programme on immunization by 80 per cent; (b) reduce maternal mortality related to dystocia and post-partum haemorrhaging by 30 per cent; and (c) encourage the community and women in particular to take charge of their health.

11. Priority actions will be to build on the achievements and strengths of UNICEF in the implementation of national policies and, more specifically, to expand and improve the quality and coverage of health services with particular emphasis on rural and urban fringe areas; to improve sanitation and drinking water coverage; to support decentralization by strengthening and developing capacity at the operational and community levels and by familiarizing the other levels (central and regional) with their new roles; to ensure the sustainability of services through an equitable system of cost-sharing and the development of partnerships; to ensure complementarity among intersectoral activities; and lastly, to coordinate assistance at all levels with a view to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of social and health policies.

12. The objective of the development programme is to help the country to enhance the basic skills and knowledge of children and women to enable them to better enjoy their rights. Priority actions will be to: (a) improve access to basic education by reducing disparities (between boys and girls and between regions). This will be achieved by encouraging a new partnership approach to schools which, inter alia, will give the community a greater say in the management of schools and help tailor programme content to local needs; (b) enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the system of basic education by improving the quality of curricula, strengthening teacher training capacity and promoting the systematic use of the list of schools as a decentralized planning tool; and (c) improve women's access to functional literacy in order to enhance their social, economic, cultural and political power.

13. The objectives of the protection programme are to assist the country to: (a) create an environment that is propitious to the enjoyment of rights; and (b) ensure greater economic and social integration of women and children needing special protection. The priority activities will be to: (a) contribute to the promotion, enjoyment and protection of rights by strengthening the legal framework and enhancing the skills and capacities of public services and civil society; and (b) establish specific measures for particularly vulnerable women and children by supporting the preparation of a national special protection policy, giving them greater access to basic services and establishing or strengthening more specialized structures and services.

14. One of the programme's strengths is the high level of involvement of the Malian authorities from the start of the institutionalized programming process as reflected in the establishment of an interministerial task force (steering committee). Moreover, the systematic use of intersectoral working groups (which have included Mali's development partners) has led to widespread compliance with the strategies adopted and a firm commitment by the authorities to the completion of the next programme. Potential obstacles to the execution of the

programme could be the Government's ability to continue to implement the decentralization process in a democratic manner and to keep the peace in the north of the country.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1998-2002*

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Survival	7 500	9 000	16 500
Development	5 500	5 500	11 000
Protection	2 000	1 000	3 000
Cross-sectoral strategies (social mobilization, monitoring and evaluation)	1 605	500	2 105
Total	16 605	16 000	32 605

*These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.